

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GEORGE 01338 280441Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----081952 280445Z /62

R 271130Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6661

S E C R E T GEORGETOWN 1338

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FOR ASST SECRETARY TODMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PINT, BY
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO PRIMIN BURNHAM

REF: GEORGETOWN 501 AND PREVIOUS

1. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, WE HAVE HAD BEFORE US IN OUR RELATIONS WITH GUYANA, EVEN PRE-DATING MY ARRIVAL LAST SEPT., THE OUTSTANDING REQUEST OF PRIMIN BURNHAM THAT HE BE PERMITTED TO PAY A COURTESY CALL ON PRESIDENT CARTER. IN THE VARIOUS EXCHANGES ON THIS REQUEST CERTAIN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS WERE DEFINED:

(A) BURNHAM WANTED THIS APPOINTMENT TO PRECEDE A VISIT WHICH HE HAD PLANNED DURING 1978 TO THE USSR, OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND NORTH KOREA;

(B) BURNHAM FELT THAT SUCH A MEETING WAS NECESSARY AS A PRELUDE TO VISITS HE HOPED TO MAKE TO VARIOUS COMMUNITIES OF GUYANESE LOCATED IN SOME OF THE MAJOR CITIES OF THE UNITED STATES SUCH AS NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND LOS ANGELES;

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(C) WE FELT THAT SUCH A MEETING WOULD PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY: TO REVIEW WITH BURNHAM THE ADMINISTRATION'S STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS; DEMONSTRATE OUR ACCEPTANCE OF IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM; INDICATE OUR INTEREST IN OBTAINING GUYANA'S UNDERSTANDING (AS A THIRD WORLD BELLWETHER) OF OUR POSITION ON SUCH ISSUES AS THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE, CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT,

ETC.; AND TO CONVEY OUR BELIEF IN THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING A DEMOCRATIC FRAMEWORK IN GUYANA.

2. AS TIME WENT BY AND IT BECAME APPARENT THAT MORE PRESSING DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL DEMANDS ON THE PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE WERE CONSPIRING TO DIMINISH THE LIKELIHOOD OF A BURNHAM-CARTER MEETING WITHIN THE TIMEFRAME THE PRIME MINISTER HAD HOPED FOR, IT WAS DECIDED TO INFORM HIM CANDIDLY THAT THIS WAS THE CASE. IN RESPONSE TO MY PROPOSAL I WAS AUTHORIZED TO SO INFORM HIM BEFORE MY DEPARTURE FROM GEORGETOWN FOR THE CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE MEETING (STATE 42625). UNFORTUNATELY, AN UNEXPECTED EVENT OCCURRED (I.E., THE SUDDEN FIRING FOR UNEXPLAINED REASONS OF FORMIN WILLS WHO HAD BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST FOR THE CARTER MEETING) AND IT WAS DECIDED THAT DELIVERY OF THE ORAL 'TURN DOWN' OF THE REQUEST FOR A MEETING SHOULD BE DEFERRED LEST IT BE LINKED WITH WILLS' SACKING IN THE MINDS OF BURNHAM AND HIS PEOPLE.

3. WHILE IN WASHINGTON FOR THE CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING IN FEBRUARY I DISCUSSED THE SITUATION WITH YOUR STAFF AND WITH THE NSC. FROM THESE TALKS IT WAS AGREED THAT A PRESIDENTIAL LETTER, FULL OF 'COTTON CANDY' AND LITTLE SUBSTANCE WOULD BE BE THE BEST WASY TO PASS THE WORD THAT A PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT WAS NOT LIKELY TO BE FORTHCOMING BEFORE 1979, AND AT THE SAME TIME MAKING CLEAR TO THE PRIMIN THAT THE TURN-DOWN OF HIS REQUEST WAS UNRELATED TO ANY CHANGE IN USG ATTITUDE TOWARD HIM OR
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GUYANA.

4. ON THE EXPECTATION THAT SUCH A LETTER COULD BE GENERATED, APPROVED AND SIGNED WITHIN A REASONABLY BRIEF PERIOD -- BY MID-MARCH, AT THE LATEST -- I WAS CONVINCED THAT THIS WAS THE BEST WAY TO PROCEED. UNFORTUNATELY, FOR VARIOUS REASONS THIS WAS NOT POSSIBLE. IN THE MEANTIME, BURNHAM ANNOUNCED HIS TRIP TO MOSCOW, NORTH KOREA, AND EAST GERMANY, AND IS NOW EMBARKED ON IT, AND THOUGH THE TOTAL IMPACT OF THE TRIP AND THE COMMITMENTS HE HAS MADE ALONG THE WAY ARE NOT YET FULLY KNOWN, IT SEEMS APPARENT FROM MOSCOW'S 08811 THAT HE MAY HAVE GONE FAR TO ACCOMMODATE HIMSELF AND HIS GOVERNMENT TO THE USSR DURING HIS TALKS. DOMESTICALLY, HE HAS RAMMED THROUGH THE PNC-CONTROLLED PARLIAMENT (ON APRIL 10, THE EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE FOR MOSCOW) A BILL TO CHANGE THE KEY ARTICLE OF THE CONSTITUTION, WHICH, IF ADOPTED BY A SIMPLE 'YES-NO' REFERENDUM, WILL GIVE HIM AND HIS PARTY CARTE BLANCHE TO INTRODUCE A NEW CONSTITUTION) AND INSURE HIS AND HIS PARTY'S CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

5. IN VIEW OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS, I AM CONVINCED THAT A PERSONAL LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT WOULD BE INADVISABLE AT

THIS TIME. I AM CERTAIN THAT BURNHAM WOULD USE SUCH A LETTER PUBLICLY FOR HIS OWN PURPOSES AND, UNTIL WE HAVE A CLEARER IDEA OF THE NATURE OF THE CONSTITUTION WHICH HE AND THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) INTEND TO IMPOSE, WE SHOULD AVOID ANY GESTURE WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED AS APPROVAL OF THIS EFFORT. I RECOMMEND, THEREFORE, THAT THAT INITIATIVE BE CANCELED AND THAT I BE AUTHORIZED TO INFORM THE PRIME MINISTER ORALLY AND PRIVATELY ON HIS RETURN THAT UNFORTUNATELY THE PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE IS COMMITTED FOR THE REMAINDER OF 1978 DUE TO THE PRESS OF DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND AS A CONSEQUENCE THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY OF AN APPOINTMENT BEFORE SOMETIME IN 1979 AT THE EARLIEST.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GEORGE01338
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780181-0665
Format: TEL
From: GEORGETOWN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780411/aaaaaipn.tel
Line Count: 136
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 0740bda6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Reference: 78 GEORGETOWN 501
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 aug 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2832168
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO PRIMIN BURNHAM
TAGS: PDIP, PINT, BY, (CARTER, JIMMY), (BURNHAM, L F S)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/0740bda6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014